Claiming justice for Israel/Palestine: the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign and Christian organizations

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The Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) against Israel seeks to embed the Palestinian struggle within the Global Justice Movement in order to mobilize support from transnational business and civil society actors. The article analyzes how two important Christian faith-based organizations respond to the BDS movement's global justice frame: the World Council of Churches (WCC) and Christians United for Israel (CUFI). Drawing on recent research into justice in international relations, the analysis shows the process of normative interaction between diverging justice claims of the BDS campaign and these Christian organizations.

Key Words: Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) / Global Justice Movement / Christian ethics / Israel / Palestine

In 2005, Palestinian activists called on civil society organizations and "people of conscience" worldwide to impose boycotts, implement divestment initiatives and urge their respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel until it recognizes the Palestinian right to self-determination.[1] This call for Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) can be seen as a continuation of earlier attempts at pressuring Israel to change its policies toward the Palestinians. However, the BDS campaign at the same time represents a new approach. Instead of urging states to take action, it moves the Palestinian issue from the level of international politics to the transnational level of non-state actors. In order to mobilize civil society and business actors, the campaign has been deliberately framed by its Palestinian initiators as being a part of the global justice movement (GJM). It employs the globally shared language of justice and human rights, thus appealing to allegedly universal, uncontested norms (Omer, 2009).

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Among the "people of conscience" targeted by BDS are many Christian groups, organizations, and individuals who have traditionally been strongly involved in advocacy and activities regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, often referring to justice norms to ground their positions. There is, however, no consensus among contemporary Christian organizations as to how to relate to this protracted political conflict in the Middle East. Positions vary from unconditional support for Israel's governments in conservative Evangelical circles based on a specific variant of eschatological thought (Croft, 2007; Davidson, 2005; Haija, 2006) to fierce criticism of the State of Israel and its policies both in the Palestinian occupied territories and within Israel proper by liberal Protestant denominations and Catholic churches and organizations (Clarke, 2005). Their critical stance is not least inspired by Palestinian liberation theology which emphasizes ethical principles of the Christian tradition (Ateek, Duayibis & Tobin, 2005; Raheb, 2012; Robson, 2010).[2] Between these poles, many other positions – including indifference – exist; however, the two opposing positions are the most prominent ones in the debate.

The article analyzes how two important Christian faith-based organizations which stand for different views of the conflict react to the BDS campaign's appeal to global justice. The World Council of Churches (WCC), comprising 345 member churches, is a long-standing critic of Israel's occupation and its stance toward the Palestinians; Christians United for Israel (CUFI), to the contrary, defends and supports Israel's policies. The analysis follows the lead of recent research in International Relations which departs from international political theory's debates on a universally valid theory of justice and instead explores justice claims of actors as claims to perceived entitlements which might concur, but often collide and may even lead to justice conflicts.[1] Such an actor-centered, empirical perspective in justice research, coupled with analytical tools from research into social movements' framing strategies (Benford & Snow, 2000; Ayres, 2004), allows for an analysis of the interaction and contestation of diverging justice claims and interpretations rather than assuming *a priori* standards of justice. While much of the literature on religion and politics suggests that religious norms, ideas and interpretations are especially resistant to change (Huntington, 1996; Beckford, 2000; DiMaggio, 1998), the following analysis shows that the justice frame promoted by the BDS movement does not leave the opposing Christian camps untouched. Rather, the interaction of the WCC's and CUFI's interpretations of justice with the BDS campaign's justice claim can be analyzed as processes of selection, adoption, remodeling and rejection which may even cause internal dissent in these organizations and their constituencies.

The article will proceed as follows. The first section briefly introduces recent work on justice claims in international politics and employs the concept of collective action frames as an analytical tool to explore such claims. The subsequent sections present the BDS campaign and state how this campaign, on the one hand, is a continuation of earlier Palestinian attempts at mobilizing international support, and on the other hand

[1] For an excellent overview and several case studies, see the special issue of *International Negotiation* "Justice in Security Negotiations" (Müller & Druckman, 2014); see also Welch (1993), Poppe & Wolff (2015), Albin (2001).

represents a different, original approach due to its deliberate attempt to embed itself in the GJM and mobilize support by non-state actors. This account is followed by an analysis of the ways in which the WCC and CUFI, representing two opposing views of the conflict among Christian communities and organizations, interact with the BDS campaign's appeal to global justice.

Justice Claims as Collective Action Frames

Recent research has rediscovered the significance of justice motives in international relations and peace and conflict studies (Daase & Humrich, 2011; Müller & Druckman, 2014). It departs, however, from the debates in political theory about the possibility and necessity of a universally valid theory of justice.[3] Rather, following Welch's pioneering work on justice and war, this research adopts an "inductive approach to understanding justice in a given political constellation, rather than starting from a researcher's normative determination about what justice is" (Müller & Druckman, 2014a, 403). Welch conceptualizes justice claims as claims to perceived entitlements which may be subject of intense contestation between actors. Justice claims can be self-referential when the claimant is maintaining that something belongs to her/him; or other-referential, referring to an injustice suffered by someone else (Welch, 1993). The approach can be broadly situated within constructivism's emphasis on norms, ideas and language as being constitutive of social reality (Poppe & Wolff, 2013). More specifically, it is related to recent constructivist research on norm contestation (Acharya, 2009, Wolff & Zimmermann, 2015).

From the perspective of this inductive approach, the controversy between the BDS campaign's appeal to the allegedly universally accepted norms of the GJM and its critics is not one between a universal standard of justice and its opposite, injustice. Rather, it can be analyzed as interaction and contestation of diverging claims to perceived entitlements which refer to fundamental norms about rights, benefits, and obligations in a given area (Welch, 1993: 198). The initiators of BDS have presented self-referential claims to perceived entitlements – such as Palestinian self-determination and equality for Palestinian Israeli citizens– in the language of the GJM in order to transform them into other-referential claims of supporters across the world. The analysis of the WCC's and CUFI's perception of and reactions to the BDS campaign shows the process of normative interaction between different justice claims.

These diverging justice claims will be analyzed by help of social movement theory's analytical concept of collective action frames as "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action" (McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996, p. 6). Such signifying work or meaning construction is necessary to forge collective identities and motivate active engagement in order to bring about change. Social movement theorists distinguish between diagnostic frames which identify a problem, prognostic frames which elaborate on possible consequences, and motivational frames which aim at motivating people for

action. Referring to injustice is, in fact, a diagnostic frame which from the early writings in social movement theory to contemporary research has been regarded as a central – if not *the* central – leitmotif in framing processes whereby "[…] injustice frames appear to be fairly ubiquitous across movements advocating some form of political and/or economic change" (Benford & Snow, 2000, pp. 615–616)

The GJM, for instance, has constructed the fight against neoliberal globalization as its master frame which is based on the "crystallization of a broadly interpretive, increasingly transnationally-shared diagnostic frame that attributes a variety of social ills to the past 15-20 year span of neoliberal ascendancy" (Ayres, 2004, p. 12; see Giugni, Bandler & Eggert, 2006). By referring to these social ills as injustice – and in turn demanding justice on a global scale – the GJM coalesces around claims to perceived entitlements. The content of these entitlements is, however, rather vague. The GJMs justice claims cover a broad range of issues such as human rights, protection of the environment, social justice, democracy, and women's rights, combined with a clear-cut enemy: neoliberal globalization. Not least this vagueness has facilitated the GJM's transnational expansion. The movement managed to foster support among existing social movements across the world as well as in the broader public, becoming a 'movement of movements' (Della Porta, 2007b, 3-4; Ayres, 2004). By explicitly embedding the BDS campaign within the GJM, Palestinian activists seek to participate in this success story and move the Palestinian issue from the level of state politics to the transnational level of civil society and business actors. However, the campaign also ties in with earlier Palestinian attempts at boycotting Israel which will be briefly presented in the next section.

Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: Historical Roots of a Controversial Approach

On July 9, 2005, representatives of Palestinian civil society issued the call for 'Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions'. More than 170 Palestinian civil society organizations endorsed the call upon

> "[…] international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era. We appeal to you to pressure your respective states to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel."

According to the call, these punitive measures are supposed to be maintained until Israel meets its obligation to

> "recognize the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law by:
> 1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall
> 2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
> 3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194." (BDS, www.bdsmovement.net)

The call was published exactly one year after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) had issued its advisory opinion on Israel's separation wall. The ICJ had declared the course of the wall illegal and prompted all states to see to it that any impediment, resulting from the wall's construction, to the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to self-determination, should be brought to an end; moreover, the Court requested all state parties to the Geneva Convention to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law (International Court of Justice, 2004).

The ICJ's opinion became an important milestone in the development of the BDS campaign because it laid the groundwork "for an international solidarity movement aimed at holding Israel accountable to the Geneva Convention" (Jamjoum, 2011, p. 139). Due to this political opportunity, Palestinian civil society leaders were now able to refer to an internationally recognized Court's legal opinion to substantiate their struggle against Israel's policies. However, the BDS call was by far not the first appeal to fight Israeli policies by means of boycott, sanctions, and non-violent resistance (Mason & Falk, 2016). Already in the 1920s, Palestinians used boycotts as a means to fight both the British mandate authorities and the emerging Zionist institutions. After the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948, member states of the Arab League, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) imposed sanctions on the newly established State of Israel. After the founding of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, the focus of Palestinian resistance and its international supporters shifted towards armed struggle against Israel. In the first Intifada in 1987, Palestinians utilized a broad range of non-violent instruments of resistance, including boycotts of Israeli goods and services (Lockman, 1990; Schiff & Ya'ari, 1990). In the 1990s, the Oslo peace process and the subsequent establishment of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) caused some confusion in the international solidarity movement as the Palestinians themselves were divided on the goals and strategies for their struggle: either pro or contra the state-building project in the West-Bank and Gaza promoted by the PNA. During the second Intifada, in 2002, Palestinian intellectuals and academics called for a comprehensive economic, cultural and academic boycott of Israel, which two years later was turned into the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) (Hallward, 2013, 7-8).

Although the contemporary BDS call thus stands in a tradition of several appeals for international solidarity, boycotts, and sanctions over the course of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it marks a different and original approach to the Palestinian struggle. The BDS call is characterized by a degree of unity within Palestinian civil society which had not been reached by previous attempts to galvanize international support. More than 170 Palestinian civil society organizations endorsed the original call, including trade unions, faith-based communities, non-governmental organizations, student organizations, political parties from all sectors of Palestinian society. Most importantly, the BDS call reintroduces the hitherto neglected parts of the Palestinian people to the collective struggle against Israel, namely the Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian-Arab citizens of Israel. The text of the appeal reflects this encompassing nature of the campaign in its

three core demands of the State of Israel: to end the occupation, to secure equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel, and to promote the right of return of Palestinian refugees. Therefore observers have called BDS "a truly a Palestinian *national* movement." (McMahon, 2014, p. 67)

However, even within Palestinian society and politics there is no consensus on BDS. Mahmud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority (PA), stated that the PA did not support the boycott of Israel as a whole, but only of products from Israeli settlements in the occupied territories as the PA had relations with the State of Israel (The Times of Israel, 2013). This differentiation between boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel writ large and against the settlements and corporations profiting from the occupation is shared by many civil society organizations in Israel, the US, and Europe who are critical of the occupation but generally supportive of the Israeli state. Particularly the third goal of the BDS call – to respect, protect and promote the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and their properties – has caused them to suspect a hidden agenda, namely to destroy the State of Israel via the backdoor by way of changing the demographic balance through the return of millions of refugees and their descendants. (McMahon, 2014, p. 73; Hallward, 2013, p. 12-13). The controversy on the moral and political implications of BDS has also been taken up by many prominent intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky (2014), Martha Nussbaum (2007), Richard Falk (2010), and Neve Gordon (2009).[4]

Opponents of BDS do not differentiate between these variants of BDS. They regard all boycotts, divestments and sanctions as an attempt to destroy the State of Israel. The fiercest opponent of BDS is, of course, Israel's government. In summer 2015, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli government officials declared BDS a strategic threat. "Using language the Israeli government usually reserves for the likes of Hamas or Iran's nuclear program, senior figures […] have turned on the movement […]Netanyahu explicitly attempted to link boycott movements to historic 'anti-semitism'" (Beaumont 2015). A year earlier, Netanyahu had described BDS as being on the wrong side of the moral divide. As a consequence of this opposition not only the Israeli government, but also civil society groups predominantly in the US, in Europe and in Israel have set up initiatives to counter the BDS campaign, some of them with the help of considerable financial resources from wealthy US-American businessmen.[5]

Despite the controversy surrounding BDS, the campaign has attracted many supporters around the world and drawn much attention by media, politics, and civil society alike. One reason for this development is, as the next section shows, the campaign's appeal to global justice.

BDS: Riding the Wave of the Global Justice Movement

By far the most intriguing feature of the BDS campaign which sets it apart from earlier forms of boycott is its attempt to connect itself with the contemporary normative discourse in transnational civil society. The Palestinian initiators have constructed a collective action frame which skillfully utilizes concepts and language from the GJM. Thereby, they seek to address a transnational audience of non-state actors and embed the Palestinian cause in the global struggle for universal norms such as justice, freedom, and human rights. The self-referential claim to a perceived entitlement, namely Palestinian self-determination, is transformed in order to become an other-referential justice claim of "people of conscience" around the world. A quote from Barghouti, one of the BDS founders, demonstrates the campaign's ambition to not only pursue the realization of Palestinian self-determination and human rights, but become an integral part and even a moral anchor of the GJM:

> The global BDS movement for Palestinian rights presents a progressive, anti racist, sustainable, moral and effective form of civil, non-violent resistance for Palestinian human rights that is also fast becoming one of the key political catalysts and moral anchors for a strengthened, reinvigorated, international social movement capable of ending the law of the jungle and upholding in its stead the rule of law, reaffirming the rights of all humans to freedom, equality, and dignified living (Barghouti, 2010: 7).

To achieve this transformation, the campaign first of all draws on the language of a previous successful movement for boycott, divestment, and sanctions. In order to conceive of a diagnostic frame which is immediately understood in the global public sphere, it refers to the case of the international struggle against the Apartheid regime in South Africa. By comparing Israel's policies to the South African Apartheid system, the BDS movement claims to apply "a universal framework of norms that equates their critique of Israel with their critique of Apartheid in South Africa [...] the Palestinian experience is transformed into metonym of broader experiences of oppression, neoliberal imperialism, and colonization – the Palestinian 'story' and 'identity' are reified, abstracted, and generalized" (Omer, 2009, pp. 497–498). Barghouti therefore calls BDS a movement which evokes "the same principles of freedom, justice, and equal rights that were upheld by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and the civil rights movement in the United States among many others" (Barghouti, 2010, pp. 3). The fact that Desmond Tutu, former Archbishop of Cape Town and iconic leader of the Anti-Apartheid struggle in South Africa, has endorsed the BDS call lends this framing strategy enormous credibility in transnational civil society (Tutu, 2014). This process of generalization and abstraction is further corroborated by frequent references to international conventions on human rights and principles of international law as exemplified in the BDS call. "Indeed [...] support for Palestinian human rights has become the emblematic solidarity movement of our time." (Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2009, p. 38)

Yet not only the normative frame of reference but also the tactics used in the BDS movement parallel the GJM in which non-violence and anti-consumerist activism is an

"important component of the transnational popular opposition to neoliberal globalization and quest for global justice" (Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2009, p. 35). By embedding itself within the GJM, the BDS campaign borrows these prognostic and motivational frames which are familiar to civil society activists across the world and allow for a transnational mobilization for solidarity action. According to the BDS call, solidarity action can take three forms. The most difficult component to realize is the call for sanctions as these punitive measures are instruments of states – and only few states such as Venezuela or Bolivia have expressed their dissent with Israel by withdrawing their ambassadors or expelling Israel's in the aftermath of the Lebanon and Gaza wars. Instead, many states around the world – and particularly the US, the EU and other Western states as well as countries such as India, Nigeria, and China– have continued their political and economic support for Israel (Jamjoum 2011, p. 143). Arab states such as Bahrain and Oman which had been part of the Arab boycott of Israel have abandoned their punitive measures in exchange for economic benefits such as free trade arrangements with the US (McMahon, 2014, p. 68).

However, the other two components which seek to mobilize non-state actors have proven to be more effective. An increasing number of companies as well as public and private institutions have decided to withdraw stocks and funds from corporations or end trade relations with firms whose operations they deem to be violating Palestinian rights and international law – among them the Presbyterian Church USA, Hampshire College in the US, Norway's Government Global Pension Fund, the French-Israeli consortium Veolia, the Dutch Pension Fund PGGM, the Danish bank Danske, and the British retailer Marks & Spencer (Gertheiss & Wolf, 2014). At the same time, these divestment measures by US and European institutions and companies point to the discrepancy between the BDS campaign and the implementation of boycott and divestment measures by other actors. Strikingly, none of the European companies which have divested from Israeli businesses have referred to the BDS call in their public statements regarding their changed policies. Rather, they have either based their decisions on their commitment to corporate social responsibility norms which include conflict sensitivity and respect of international law – or simply given pure economic reasons. The reason behind their distancing from the BDS movement lies in the stated goals of the campaign as quoted above. Most companies which have divested have taken care to stress that they do not disengage from their business relations with Israeli companies in general but only from the ones which operate in the occupied territories or support the settlements (Gertheiss & Wolf, 2014). In the same vein, the European Union's decision to label products which originate from the occupied Palestinian territories should not be conflated with a general boycott of Israel; in fact, the labeling affects less than one percent of all trade from Israel to the EU. However, the new EU policy drew strong criticism from the government of Israel (Beaumont, 2014).

This kind of tension can also be observed in the case of the third tactic, boycotts. Consumer boycotts may be directed either at goods produced in Jewish settlements in the occupied territories or generally at all products from Israel, depending on the political stance the

boycotters take. Cultural and academic boycotts, in contrast, have tended to be more general in nature. The BDS campaign regularly calls on international artists scheduled to perform in Israel to cancel their appearances in order to support BDS. In the same vein, they have called upon cultural organizers abroad not to invite Israeli cultural workers to their countries in order not to convey a positive image of the Israeli democracy while concealing its human rights and international law violations (McMahon, 2014, pp. 69–70). Famous artists such as Roger Waters, Elvis Costello, and Carlos Santana have cancelled their performances in Israel in response to BDS. Academic boycott seeks to isolate Israeli academic institutions because they are allegedly part of the "Zionist settler-colonial project in Palestine" (McMahon, 2014, p. 71). The BDS campaign argues that they are complicit with Israel's illegitimate polices by providing research and knowledge to build up and stabilize both the occupation and discrimination against Palestinian citizens in Israel. The academic boycott has been criticized, however, for infringing on academic freedom (ibid.).

Faith-based Justice? Christians in the Midst of the Turmoil

The justice claim brought forward by the BDS movement has stirred much controversy internationally. This section explores how two Christian faith-based organizations – the WCC and CUFI – respond to the Palestinian appeal to universal norms in order to mobilize solidarity action by transnational non-state actors for its cause. WCC and CUFI are among the most vocal and active Christian organizations with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They are very different in their organizational structure: one being an umbrella organization comprising member churches across the world, the other a US-based, single-issue advocacy organization. The WCC draws its influence and importance from its global constituency in member churches in more than 110 countries. With its main office being located at the UN headquarter in Geneva, the WCC directs much of its advocacy at an international audience. CUFI, on the other hand, utilizes its broad support from Evangelicals of different backgrounds in the US in order to lobby the US government, the most important external power in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given these differences, these organizations do not lend themselves easily to a comparison of their organizational structure, reach and effectiveness. However, they have in common that they claim to represent the two predominant Christian faith-based approaches to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, they are taken as examples of the ways in which Christian organizations react to the challenge of the BDS call. The objective of the analysis conducted below is not to compare the two organizations as such but their theological and ethical responses to BDS. The analysis is based on the inductive approach of empirical justice research: Rather than assuming a universal standard of justice, it looks into different actors' claims to perceived self- and other-referential entitlements which may be consensual, but may also be controversial. The resulting encounter of different justice claims is conceived of as a process of normative interaction. Instead of an either/or-logic of justice vs. injustice, this interaction involves processes of selection, adjustment, critique, rejection and internal dissent on part of the Christian organizations which hold opposing views of the conflict.

The Critics: "Peace with Justice"

The most influential Christian organization which represents a critical stance toward Israel is the WCC. The WCC is an umbrella organization of the ecumenical movement with 345 member churches (in 2013) from more than 110 countries throughout the world, claiming to represent more than 500 million believers. Founded in 1948, it brings together churches from various traditions, including Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist and Reformed churches. Through its sub-organization Commission of Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), the WCC has early on established and maintained a continuous presence at the United Nations headquarters in New York and Geneva. In addition to the goals of unity in one faith and work for mission and evangelism, the WCC claims to "engage in Christian service by serving human needs, breaking down barriers between people, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation" (WCC, www.oikumene.org).

The WCC has long been active in advocacy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2007, it launched the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) which has the task to co-ordinate "church advocacy for peace, aimed at ending the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories in accordance with UN resolutions, and demonstrate its commitment to inter-religious action for peace and to justice that serves all peoples of the region" (WCC, www.oikumene.org). Both in the WCC's overall mission statement as well as in the PIEF's self-description, justice is thus mentioned upfront as one of the main normative principles to which the organization aspires. At least on a rhetorical level, the BDS movement's justice claim thus resonates well with WCC's normative outlook. Not least is the WCC a major player in the World Social Forum, putting it squarely in the GJM (see Smith & Smythe in this volume for further details and analysis). With regard to Israeli/Palestine, PIEF's goals are to challenge both governments' and public support for the occupation as well as to challenge theological and biblical justifications for the occupation and offer alternative readings of the Christian tradition. In addition, PIEF claims to work to maintain a viable Palestinian Christian presence in Israel and Palestine (PIEF, www.pief.oikumene.org).

Once a year, the WCC holds the so-called "World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel". It entails services, prayers, and educational events in member churches across the world as well as in Israel and Palestine. For the 2015 event from 21 to 27 September, the theme was 'God has broken down the dividing walls' which put the Israeli security barrier (the wall) into focus which according to the WCC impacts severely on Palestinians' livelihood. WCC's general secretary Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit stated in his message to participants that the strategic nonviolent witness of Palestinian Christians in the occupied territories was intended to confront "the unjust structures and systems supporting Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian land". Tveit said that WCC member churches had made the WCC's agenda of 'peace with justice in Israel and Palestine' a top priority in their work: "The global church effort to promote awareness and advocacy informed by the perspectives of Christians in Palestine and Israel is growing." (WCC, 2015)

Given the focus on 'peace with justice' with regard to Israel/Palestine, it is no surprise that the WCC has published statements and documents which reflect its normative interaction with the BDS campaign's appeal to global justice. In a position paper on the WCC's policy on Israel/Palestine from 2014, the organization confirms the Palestinians' right to self-determination while at the same time recognizing Israel and its legitimate security concerns. However, both the settlements and the separation barrier are declared illegal by reference to international law and international humanitarian law. The second last item of the document takes up the issue of BDS, although it avoids the term itself: "Certain economic measures are legitimate forms of pressure for peace. The WCC encourages member churches to avoid investments or other economic links to illegal activities on occupied territory, and to boycott settlement products." (WCC, 2014) In a separate statement, the WCC further details its stance on "economic measures and Christian responsibility toward Israel and Palestine". The WCC notes that several of its member churches in different regions of the world have undertaken initiatives "to become better stewards of justice in economic affairs which link them to on-going violations of international law in occupied territory" (WCC, 2014a). Such solidarity with those who are oppressed, the WCC claims, is clearly the kind of action which should govern the lives of people in covenant with God. Mentioning divestment measures of member churches such as the Presbyterian Church (Hallward 2013, 141-176) and the United Methodist Church, the WCC reiterates its 2005 assessment that these actions are "commendable in both method and manner, using criteria rooted in faith. The purpose of these actions is to bring a just peace which will benefit both Palestine and Israel […] We are convinced that targeted economic measures are an important nonviolent strategy for promoting peace and abating violence" (WCC, 2014a). The WCC provides on its website a 20-page long list of economic measures adopted by churches, parishes, and Christian development organizations across the world, among them many WCC members such as the Anglican Church of Canada, the Methodist Church in the United Kingdom and the Church of Sweden (PIEF, https://pief.oikoumene.org/en/world-week-for-peace/resources).

In sum, the WCC adopts part of the BDS movement's collective action frame which presents the Palestinian cause as an issue of global justice. However, the WCC does not align itself openly with the BDS movement and its three core goals. Against the background that BDS is accused by its critics of delegitimizing Israel (Fishman, 2012), the WCC seems to be keen on avoiding the impression that it too questions Israel's right to exist and defend itself. As the perceived entitlement to which the BDS campaign refers, Palestinian self-determination, is left vague with regard to its concrete meaning and long-term consequences for the State of Israel, the WCC prefers to not be equated with the BDS call. Instead, the WCC stresses the differentiation between the illegality of the occupation and the legitimacy of the State of Israel. The organization highlights its motto of 'peace with justice' which entails support for economic measures against Israel's violations of international law and international humanitarian law, but not against the State of Israel in general. In addition to references to global norms such as human rights and global justice, the WCC frequently refers to concepts such as "Christian responsibility" and "living in the covenant of God". In its interaction with the BDS campaign's collective action

frame, the WCC seeks to maintain its own biblically derived language and ethical principles such as responsibility, justice and solidarity from a Christian perspective, thus keeping its own distinctive voice rather than becoming a all-out supporter of BDS.

The Supporters: Fighting for the 'Promised Land'

In contrast to the WCC's accentuation of Biblical ethics, many conservative Evangelical supporters of Israel emphasize the Bible's promises to the Jewish people as well as prophecies and eschatological narratives which according to their interpretation link the future fate of the Jews with the Second Coming of Jesus. CUFI represents this kind of theological interpretation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which is shared by a large portion of Evangelicals in the US as well as in other countries (Saleh and Zakariya, 2012, Weber, 2009). However, the normative interaction with Palestinian liberation theology as well as with the BDS campaign's appeal to global justice has prompted some US Evangelicals to review their position vis-á-vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This change of attitude is part of a broader rediscovery of the Bible's ethical and social teachings by the so-called 'new Evangelicals' (Pally 2011). While CUFI as an organization fights vigorously against BDS, a small but growing part of the Evangelical world has become more receptive to the BDS campaign's justice frame.

CUFI claims that it is the largest pro-Israel organization in the US with about three million members and "one of the leading Christian grassroots movements in the world" (www.cufi.org). It was founded by the Protestant minister and televangelist John Hagee in 2006. CUFI distributes literature, DVDs, a magazine, and Middle East Briefings for pastors and lay people. It organizes so-called 'Standing with Israel meetings' and conferences as well as the annual 'Nights to Honor Israel' in congregations throughout the US and beyond. CUFI has set up "CUFI on Campus" groups in colleges and universities across the US. In addition, CUFI is active in lobbying the US Congress on behalf of Israel. To that end, CUFI hosts the annual Washington Summit which allows CUFI delegates to directly speak to Senators and Representatives. In 2015, according to CUFI more than 5000 delegates took part in the summit and demanded Congress vote against the nuclear deal with Iran (www.cufi.org).

CUFI bases its advocacy on the Biblical scriptures. On its website, it claims: "The Bible commands us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6), to speak out for Zion's sake (Isaiah 62:1), to be watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem (Isaiah 62:6) and to bless the Jewish people (Genesis 12:3). These and many other Bible verses have one overriding message – as Christians we have a Biblical obligation to defend Israel and the Jewish people in their time of need." (www.cufi.org, pastors luncheons) David Brog, CUFI's former executive director, has distanced his organization from accusations that Evangelical Christians would support Israel in order to "speed Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ"; instead, Brog contends, Christians "support Israel for the same reasons that religious Jews support Israel. It starts in the book of Genesis, where God promises the Land of Israel to the Jewish people. But what starts in the Bible does not end

there. Christian Zionism is informed by an understanding of the long tragedy of Jewish history and the need for a Jewish state" (Brog, 2012).

With regard to the BDS campaign, CUFI has become one of the most vocal opponents in the US. It figured as an influential ally in a successful campaign by the Christian Zionist group "Proclaiming Justice to the Nations" (PJTN) to get the Tennessee state legislature to adopt a resolution which condemns the BDS movement. According to the Jewish news service JNS.org, the resolution, which was approved by the Tennessee Senate and House of Representatives with only one dissenting vote in 2015, declares the BDS movement to be "one of the main vehicles for spreading anti-Semitism and advocating the elimination of the Jewish state" (Savage 2015). A similar resolution was adopted by the state legislature of Indiana, this time pushed for by the Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana (JAACI). On the national level, CUFI has lent its support to a bill introduced by congressmen Peter Roskam and Dan Lipinski in February 2014 under the title "Protect Academic Freedom Act" (H.R. 4009). If adopted, the measure would block federal funding for American universities engaging in a boycott of Israeli academic institutions or scholars "to ensure that taxpayer dollars are not used to fund bigoted attacks against Israel that undermine the fundamental principles of academic freedom", as Roskam explains on his website (https.//roskam.house.gov/media-center/press-releases). 'CUFI on Campus' has made the fight against the BDS movement's rather successful mobilization on US colleges and university campuses its main task. Utilizing the whole range of social media tools, CUFI on Campus provides its members with ideas and tactics how to counter BDS, accompanied by a range of written materials, videos, and presentations on the organization's website.[6]

When countering the justice claim of the BDS movement, or in fact any criticism of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians, CUFI rarely refers to the term 'justice' in its statements, documents, booklets, and regular e-mails to its members. It does, however, formulate a very strong justice claim if understood as a claim to a perceived entitlement, albeit on behalf of the Jewish people: that God himself has promised the land of Israel to the Jews. As Hagee writes in one of his booklets, referring to scripture from Genesis and other books of the Hebrew Bible:

> *The Creator of the Universe has declared Israel's ownership to the Promised Land throughout His Holy Word and we, as Bible-believing Christians, must acknowledge and act on our God-given mandate to stand in support of Israel and their claim to the land. (Hagee, 2016, p. 5-6)*

Obviously, this justice claim runs contrary to the BDS movement's claim to a perceived entitlement, namely Palestinian self-determination within the same territory, although the borders of the land claimed are not exactly defined, neither by CUFI, nor by the BDS movement. While the WCC is seeking a middle way between these claims, CUFI remains a steadfast defender of Israeli policies.

However, in recent years, a growing number of conservative Evangelicals – among them prominent leaders such as Lynn Hybels (Willow Creek Church) and Brother Andrew (Open Doors) – have taken a more critical stance toward Israel's policies in the occupied territories. They diverge from the interpretation of historical events as fulfillments of biblical prophecy and re-center the debate on Christian ethics. In 2007, a number of well-known Evangelical leaders published an open letter to President Bush, seeking "to correct a serious misperception among some people including some U.S. policymakers that all American evangelicals are opposed to a two-state solution and creation of a new Palestinian state that includes the vast majority of the West Bank" (Letter, 2007). In the letter, leaders of Evangelical organizations, universities, and churches embrace God's promise in the Hebrew Bible that he will bless those who bless Israel, but emphasize that blessing and loving people – including Jews and the State of Israel – "does not mean withholding criticism when it is warranted." On the contrary, it requires "acting in ways that promote the genuine and long-term well-being of our neighbors." (Letter, 2007) The writers recognize that both Palestinians and Israelis have legitimate rights to the land, stretching back for millennia, and offer their support for the US government's policy of working toward a two-state solution. In other words, these Evangelicals contest CUFI's other-referential claim to the perceived entitlement to ownership of the land.

This change of attitude is reinforced due to the successful mobilization by Palestinian Christians, most notably a number of activists in the perimeters of Bethlehem Bible College, Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, and the Holy Land Trust, all based in the occupied territories (Robson, 2010). A biannual conference organized by the College under the title "Christ at the Checkpoint" has attracted quite a number of European and US Evangelicals as speakers and participants. In its manifesto, it says that "any exclusive claim to the land of the Bible in the name of God is not in line with the teaching of Scripture" (www.christatthecheckpoint.com). Although none of the prominent Evangelical leaders from the US or from Europe have yet gone public with a pro-BDS statement, their Palestinian counterparts are openly supporting BDS: The Holy Land Trust is one of the signees of the 2005 call, and Sabeel, too, has embraced BDS publicly. This re-evaluation of Evangelical engagement with Israel/Palestine is part of a broader change in US Evangelicalism. Dubbed "new Evangelicals" (Pally, 2011), these theologians attempt to redirect the agenda from abortion, homosexuality and support for Israel to issues of social justice, human rights, environmental protection, and peace on a global scale (Gushee 2012) – values and goals which resonate with many of the GJM's values and goals.

Conclusion

In order to garner support from transnational non-state actors, the BDS campaign makes a deliberate attempt to frame the Palestinian cause as an issue of global justice. It adopts both the language and tactics of the GJM: speaking of justice, human rights, and solidarity, and comparing the Palestinian struggle with the fight against South African Apartheid or the civil rights movement in the US; and calling for consumer boycotts, business

divestments, and sanctions against Israel. Looking at this strategy from the perspective of empirical justice research which defines justice as actors' claims to perceived entitlements in a given situation allows a different analysis: The BDS campaign transforms self-referential claims to perceived entitlements, such as Palestinian self-determination, into justice claims which function as collective action frame that can be understood and shared by supporters around the world. Instead of assuming an *a priori*-standard of justice, this empirically oriented approach looks at actors' justice claims. Therefore, it becomes possible to explore the interaction of different justice-claims instead of maintaining the analytically unhelpful normative dichotomy of justice/injustice.

As an example for such normative interaction between different justice claims, the analysis focused on two major Christian organizations' responses to the BDS campaign's appeal to global justice from a faith-based perspective. The World Council of Churches seeks to navigate a middle way between contradicting justice claims, basing its approach on Biblical ethics. It supports parts of the diagnostic and motivational frames of the BDS campaign such as the illegality of occupation and the tactic of consumer boycotts against Israeli settlements. But at the same time, the WCC takes care to avoid the impression of delegitimizing Israel as a whole – an allegation which is brought forward frequently against the BDS campaign due to the vagueness of its long-term goals with regard to the State of Israel. Christians United for Israel, on the other hand, responds to the BDS campaign with a counter-claim to a perceived entitlement on behalf of the Jewish people: God's promise of the Land of Israel to the Jews. As this claim clearly contradicts the BDS campaign's justice claim, there is little room for rapprochement. Yet within the broader Evangelical camp which CUFI seeks to speak for, there is growing uneasiness with this traditional Evangelical view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The BDS campaign's strategy to embed itself in the GJM has been a rather successful move. Even Christian faith-based organizations with their own long-standing normative frames of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot but interact with this appeal to supposedly universal standards of justice. However, this process of interaction consists of partial adoption, reformulation, counter-claims, critique and internal dissent rather than of simple expressions of acceptance and rejection. Looking at actors' justice claims instead of assuming an *a priori*-standard of justice makes these processes of interaction visible.

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[1] BDS, www.bdsmovement.net.

[2] In 2009, a group of Palestinian Christian clergy and lay people issued the Kairos Palestine document which calls on Christians around the world to stand and pray for Palestine and work against the injustice of the occupation, based on theological arguments. See http://www.kairospalestine.ps/index.php/about-us/kairos-palestine-document.

[3] Prominent voices in this debate are, among many other contributors, Pogge (2001), Nardin (2006), Fraser (2008).

[4] For a glimpse into the scholarly debate on BDS, see Hallward (2013), Bakan & Abu-Laban (2009), Hallward & Shaver (2012), Rodriguez (2013), McMahon (2014), Omer (2009), Fishman (2012), Steinberg (2006), Yemini (2011).

[5] Examples are NGO Monitor in Israel (www.ngo-monitor.org), Campus Watch (www.campus-watch.org), or Canary Mission (https://canarymission.org).

[6] See for example this video: https://prezi.com/mim5v8n83qie/bds-what-is-it-how-to-fight-it-by-jessica-marzucco/